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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes an inclusive approach to disaffection in Merton Education Authority, a school district southwest of London (England). Instead of concentrating on providing for students with emotional and behavior difficulties in an off-site behavior support center, Merton switched its main efforts to preventing difficult behavior through supporting mainstream schools. Components of the program include: (1) establishing a lead support service to concentrate on preventative projects that work on behavior issues rather than direct, individual support to pupils in crisis; (2) closing the local education authority's (LEA) off-site unit for disaffected and excluded pupils and setting up alternative mainstream programs; (3) closing the LEA's special school for primary pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties and providing for primary pupils in mainstream classes with high levels of multi-professional support; (4) operating three levels of intervention for behavior support work: (a) supporting whole school behavior initiatives and approaches, (b) supporting class behavior initiatives and approaches, and (c) providing direct support for individual pupils, including pupils with statements, who are assessed as having emotional and behavioral difficulties); (5) working a partnership planning process between the behavior support service and schools and teachers in which colleagues from other agencies and voluntary groups are often involved in jointly delivered projects; (6) expanding monitoring and evaluation arrangements to track pupil exclusions and reintegration; and (7) adopting a flexible approach to understanding behavior using a range of different perspectives. (Author/CR)

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Disaffection and inclusion

Merton's mainstream approach to difficult behaviour

Giles Barrow

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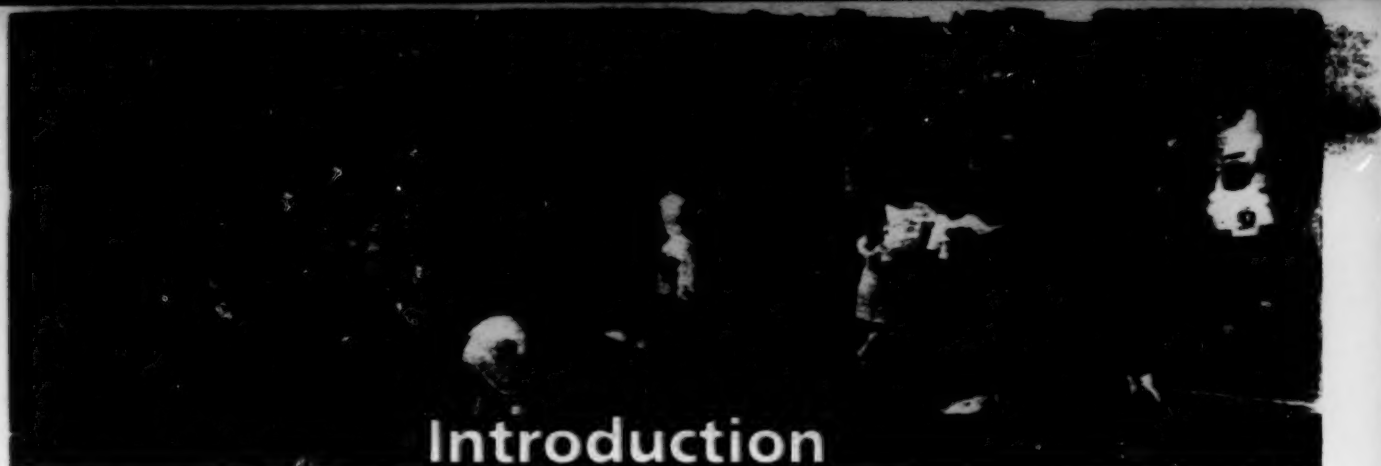
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Key points summary

The main elements of the change towards an inclusive approach to disaffection and disruption in Merton were:

- Establishing a lead support service – the **Attendance and Behaviour Support Service (ABSS)** – to concentrate on preventative project work on behaviour issues rather than direct, individual support to pupils in crisis. Although some direct individual support is provided, the bulk of behaviour support work involves consultancy, training and group work for teachers and pupils. The work of the ABSS has now been merged with the borough's Learning Support Service to form the **Integrated Support Service (ISS)**.
- **Closing the LEA's off-site unit** for disaffected and excluded pupils and setting up alternative mainstream provision known locally as the **Year 11 Programme**. Under this scheme pupils are provided with individual programmes with part-time or full-time placements outside school at college or on work experience schemes.
- **Closing the LEA's special school for primary pupils** with emotional and behavioural difficulties following a reduction in referrals and **providing for primary pupils in mainstream classes** with high levels of multi-professional support.
- Operating three levels of intervention for behaviour support work:
 - 1 Supporting whole school behaviour initiatives and approaches (eg supporting the development of school school behaviour policies).
 - 2 Supporting class behaviour initiatives and approaches (eg supporting staff by suggesting strategies for improving class management and working with groups of pupils on issues which are causing concern including attendance, conflict resolution and motivation).
 - 3 Providing direct support for individual pupils, including pupils with statements, who are assessed as having emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Working a **partnership planning process** between the ABSS and schools and teachers. Under this process goals, time limits and responsibilities for behaviour support projects are negotiated in advance and outcomes monitored and evaluated. Colleagues from other agencies and voluntary groups are often involved in jointly delivered projects.
- Expanding **monitoring and evaluation arrangements** to track pupil exclusions and re-integration and to assess the effectiveness of school support work.
- Adopting a **flexible approach to understanding behaviour** using a range of different perspectives.



There was an implicit acknowledgement that schools' concerns were well founded and that the situation required a high level of resourcing but there was a belief that a solution could be found without recourse to discounting pupils.

A very different picture to the national trend for increasing disciplinary exclusions (see Footnote) is presented in this booklet which describes an inclusive approach to disaffection and disruption in Merton Education Authority, south west London.

Although permanent exclusions increased sharply to 57 in Merton in 1993-94, they had declined to 46 by 1996-97. This fall in permanent exclusions followed moves by the LEA towards a more inclusive approach to behaviour support (see Key Points Summary, page 4). Instead of concentrating on providing for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties in an off-site behaviour support centre, Merton switched its main efforts to preventing difficult behaviour through supporting mainstream schools. The process of closing the borough's off-site centre took place when pressures to exclude were rising nationally and many other LEAs maintained or increased their off-site provision.

The formal closure of the off-site centre took place in 1997. A year later, following a gradual reduction in referrals to the special school for primary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, a decision was taken to close the school and transfer the pupils to mainstream with support. There has also been a reduction in numbers at the secondary special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

This account of Merton's alternative approach to disaffection and disruption has been written by Giles Barrow, head of the LEA's new Integrated Support Service and formerly head of the Authority's Attendance and Behaviour Support Service which led much of the change process. As well as explaining how new ways of working were developed and evaluated, the account also includes examples of classroom practice and descriptions of the various perspectives on behaviour which underpin mainstream support at Merton.

CSIE hopes that in view of widespread concern regarding rising exclusion rates across the country and as new Government initiatives on mainstream behaviour support take effect, this report will provide timely encouragement and useful information to contribute to a reversal of the worrying national trend.

Merton's experience demonstrates that it is possible – even despite the contrary pressures in force at the time – to implement effectively an inclusive response to disaffection and disruption which concentrates on developing the capacity of schools and classes rather than excluding pupils.

* The number of permanent exclusions rose from 2,910 in 1990-91 to 13,581 in 1995-96, according to a survey of English LEAs by Dr. Carl Parsons, of Christ Church College, Canterbury. This amounts to one secondary school pupil in every 240 being excluded and one primary school pupil in every 2,300. Figures from the Department for Education and Employment, based on the annual Schools' Census, show a slightly lower figure of 12,500 permanent exclusions in 1995/6.



Principles of inclusion

Merton's fundamental guiding principle is that pupils should be provided for in mainstream schools, although it is accepted that in exceptional circumstances some pupils may need to be provided for outside of mainstream. Provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties reflects this central policy.

In the past, along with many other LEAs, Merton was caught up in the contradictory practice of advocating equal opportunity and access for all, yet failing to plan for inclusion and reduce segregation. However, in recent years it moved progressively to re-align resourcing in parallel with policy. Resources which maintained segregated provision in the off-site unit for pupils with behaviour difficulties were redirected to enhancing mainstream support via the Attendance and Behaviour Support Service (ABSS).

This narrative is not intended to suggest that inclusive practice is not being developed elsewhere. Events in Merton over the past five years (1993-98) reflect the combination of a range of different inclusive approaches to difficult behaviour from other LEAs and schools to develop local policy and practice which is coherent, consistent, and sustainable.

Cultural context

Historically there has been a tendency to make a distinction between the 'needy' and the 'naughty'. The 'needy' are nurtured and the 'naughty' are punished. It might be argued that schools often represent this division by operating separate special needs and pastoral structures and procedures. The division is also reflected at LEA level where special educational needs is often administered separately from exclusions and provision for pupils out of school. One of the aims of behaviour support at Merton has been to promote a holistic appreciation to the needs of individual pupils. The organisation, procedures and practice within the LEA and schools should not inhibit or define pupil need.

Eight snapshots of school life illustrating different aspects of Merton's mainstream approach to difficult behaviour.

The gang of eight

A group of eight young men in Year 11 were identified as significantly disaffected and were causing considerable concern, particularly in terms of their racist attitudes and behaviour. All were in danger of permanent exclusion, several having been previously excluded on a fixed term basis. It was agreed that a number of sessions would be

provided by the Attendance and Behaviour Support Service (ABSS), jointly staffed by a teacher and a youth justice social worker.

One of the early exercises was to give the young men an opportunity to voice their concerns with a view to their compiling a report which could then be presented to the Head of Year and pastoral deputy. The framework for drawing up the report was a three-cornered

National context

The first serious investigation into school discipline chaired by Lord Elton in the late 1980s advocated more training for teachers in the management of pupil behaviour. However the early 1990s saw the full implementation of the National Curriculum, grant maintained status and school league tables. Arguably these factors fed competitive relations between schools and LEAs. In the race to attract the well motivated and preferably able pupils it was almost inevitable that a troubled and troublesome minority would be marginalised by schools. Although later guidance from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and the 1994 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice were ostensibly more favourable to inclusion, the earlier 'free market' reforms of the education service continued to exert significant counter pressures. The concerns of disaffected pupils generally remained a low priority with schools which were resistant to more integrative approaches to behaviour support

Local context

Merton is an outer London authority situated in south west London. The education authority comprises of 37 first, 14 middle and 9 high schools with a total school population of 23,000. One school, a girls' Catholic school, is grant-maintained. From September 1998 it is planned that the number of special schools will have been reduced to three: an all age school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, another for pupils with severe learning difficulties and a secondary special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. From September 1998 it is also planned to increase the number of on-site units to three: one for pupils with speech and language difficulties, one for younger pupils with autistic needs and a new unit for older pupils with autistic needs, many of whom attended schools outside of the Borough. Merton's off-site unit for disaffected pupils was formally closed in March 1997.

contract that included the perspective of the school, the young men and the ABSS team workers. The expectations of each group were considered and used to modify concerns and demands. It soon emerged that the young men felt ostracised by their lack of academic progress, felt a deep sense of peer support through their experience of rejection by the school and ultimately believed that their only

way of expressing their estrangement was through subversion.

Over the sessions the young men reflected on how they might best express their fears and sense of rejection, whilst appreciating the wider task which the school had of providing for all pupils. By the end of the sessions none of the young men had been excluded, nor were they for the rest of their time at

school. Senior staff within the school appreciated the value that the youngsters had placed on the opportunity to talk safely about their anxieties and aspirations.

Groupwork has been subsequently continued in the school for Years 10 and 11.

Developing outreach

The rise and fall of the off-site unit is a useful starting point for this account of the development of alternative provision for disaffected pupils at Merton. The off-site unit was typical of its type: the predominant client group were 15 to 16-year-old, Year 11 pupils who had been permanently excluded. It was a joint LEA/Social Services funded centre with teachers and social workers offering both off-site education for disaffected pupils and alternatives to custody for young offenders.

In the early 1990s tentative attempts were made to develop outreach placements from the unit to mainstream schools. The rationale for this work arose out of the recommendations of the Elton Report on discipline in schools. Two schools were involved in what became a pilot initiative during which teachers and social workers from the unit supported youngsters identified as potential referrals. Initial efforts proved successful and gradually this kind of outreach support became an important dimension of the work of the unit.

The outreach was available only to the LEA's high schools and operated predominantly on a withdrawal model of support. Staff from the unit would offer 'tutorial' type sessions outside of the classroom for individual pupils. Formal assessment of individual needs was limited and there was little dialogue between unit staff, class teachers and the wider school staff team.

By 1993 two issues had emerged. First, the practice of outreach was regarded as successful and the number of unit placements was reduced from 18 to 12 in recognition that resources could be justifiably diverted into outreach work. However, a survey carried out by the LEA inspectorate claimed that the over-reliance on withdrawal was unsatisfactory and recommended that whilst outreach work might be potentially valuable it needed significant revision.

The second emerging concern was that first and middle school headteachers had identified a clear need for behaviour support work to be developed in the junior phases. Fortunately, the LEA was successful in bidding for funding through the Government

A headteacher identified a Year 6 tutor who was finding it difficult to manage her class. The teacher was defensive about her practice, arguing that other tutors also found her group difficult. On observation it was clear that whilst there was sound practice in Year 6 classes there was little consistency and that pupils were managed very

differently across the tutors. Consequently, perceptions about individual teachers were reinforced by relatively isolated and variable practice. The potential positive impact of the work was not transferred across the year group, sustaining the inconsistent management of pupils which unfairly exposed some tutors as less effective than others.

It was not possible to work solely

with the identified teacher, partly because to do so would be to over identify her as the 'problem' which was not the case. A more effective use of support time was to develop a whole year approach which profiled good practice, allowed a staff forum to share concerns about the difficulties in Year 6 and ultimately generated a consistency of approach which emphasised effective reward and sanctioning and minimised

programme for developing approaches with disaffected pupils, Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST). This original funding enabled a small team of teachers to be established with a view to piloting behaviour support work in selected middle and first schools.

Developing the ABSS

Starting a new behaviour support project provided the LEA with an opportunity to develop new practice. The first GEST year witnessed the introduction of what came to be regarded, both locally and elsewhere, as a radical model of providing peripatetic support. Three levels of intervention were made available to schools:

- whole school development work;
- class-based work;
- individual pupil work.

In many respects this reflected what other Authorities' behaviour support services offered – the significant difference at Merton was that the emphasis explicitly steered to the first two levels, with support for individual pupils comprising a lesser element of the new team's workload. Schools were invited to refer classwork, whole-school initiatives and issue based training instead of simply referring individual pupils.

Despite an initial degree of confusion amongst schools which had anticipated a more conventional model of support, clearly agreed partnerships were formed with the new service and the pilot year (1994-95) was declared highly successful. Preliminary evaluation indicated a reduction in exclusions in the junior phases compared with a sharp rise the previous year and teachers' responses illustrated they valued an approach to providing behaviour support which concentrated on developing policy and practice rather than on individual pupils' needs.

The next round of GEST applications resulted in an increase in funding and further development. The longstanding high school outreach work was amalgamated with the new junior behaviour

weaknesses. This became a long term piece of work which eventually formed an integral component of a whole school approach. After a series of tutor meetings it was possible to launch a concerted approach to managing pupils' behaviour without reinforcing the individual teacher's sense of inadequacy. The collective confidence of the Year 6 team was raised because they achieved with a

group of pupils when they previously felt they had failed.

Effective practice extended

The ABSS spent many years preparing for the closure of its off-site unit and establishing an alternative inclusive programme. The alternative model proved successful

for Year 11 students with twice the number of placements being made available and greater success in progressing youngsters onto FE or training providers. However, this success exposed a growing area of concern – a rising number of Year 10 pupils who were at risk of, or actually permanently excluded.

In many respects the difficulties at Key Stage 4 had been known for sometime. The ABSS had been

support work. This provided a much needed boost and a clear re-focusing from individually centred work to a more systemic approach. Another smaller multi-disciplinary GEST team, initially funded to research and develop initiatives to promote attendance was also amalgamated. The overall result was the setting up of a new, extended team, comprising teachers, youth workers and education social workers with a dual focus brief covering attendance and behaviour. The new service was made freely available to all schools in the LEA, including special schools, and was appropriately named the Attendance and Behaviour Support Service (ABSS). The ABSS developed its original brief into a comprehensive range of support and training available to both schools and the LEA.

Closing the off-site unit

With the combining of the secondary and junior behaviour support teams considerable progress was made in terms of shaping practice in schools regarding the management of pupil behaviour and the development of alternative approaches, particularly for the oldest pupils. Inevitably this had an impact on the off-site unit which was becoming increasingly incongruous. The LEA was obliged to consider the future of the unit in the light of 1993 Government guidance on Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). However Merton Council members were committed to avoiding the use of segregated provision for this group of youngsters and, encouraged by the effective integrative work of the new ABSS, it was agreed that the unit would be closed and that a more innovative approach – the Year 11 Programme – would be pursued. This involved the provision of individual programmes for pupils in their last year of school which included placements in other mainstream contexts, for example, adult college, FE college and work experience.

The process of closing the off-site unit took two years and involved intense discussions amongst senior officers and councillors. The significant issues were how to accommodate the 1993 DfEE guidance on PRUs in relation to the unit which was a joint funded LEA/Social

encouraging schools to consider alternative routes for accreditation and co-ordinating time-tabling and groups to maximise the potential for motivating older disaffected pupils. Unfortunately a combination of factors limited progress. Schools pointed to the restraints of the National Curriculum, as well as regulations regarding out of school experience and registration and the fact that the service simply did not

have the resource to fully pursue opportunities. During the early months of 1997 the DfEE invited LEAs to bid for funding through its Demonstration Project Initiative. The purpose of these projects was to concentrate on developing alternative models of accrediting key skills for students at Key Stage 4. Similarly a local project, funded via the Single Regeneration Budget, also had funding for work in

alleviating disaffection amongst young people. These sources were combined to maximise the potential of any project and accordingly tied into the existing Year 11 model. Although not specifically targeted at disaffected pupils, the Merton LEA bid made a case for focusing on alternative programmes for Year 10 pupils. This would include part-time placements for no more than two days a week for disaffected

Service centre, and to consider what any alternative provision might look like if it was not to include some kind of unit resource.

The answers to both questions were in effect bound within a complex formula comprising the following factors:

- emerging national information about the failure of early established PRUs in meeting LEA and school demands
- existing inefficient deployment of teaching staff in the local unit
- increasing separation between social workers and teachers in the light of new criminal justice legislation
- increasing success of pro-active behaviour support in Merton's high schools through the ABSS.

At the point of closure the unit had 12 places, 10 of which were filled and the average daily attendance varied between four to six pupils. Three teachers were based at the centre.

The alternative provision – the Year 11 Programme – began in July 1996, with a handful of pupils who were in effect referred to the off-site unit. Of these some were maintained within mainstream school with minimal support, whilst others had a modified programme which meant either part-time or full-time attendance at college or work experience.

In the first year there were a total of 26 young people referred to the programme. A range of mainstream providers had been identified and separate contracts were made with each institution including:

- five FE Colleges
- the local 6th Form college
- the Borough's Adult College
- work experience providers
- Community Service Volunteer Programme
- two post-16 training providers
- the local Education Business Partnership.

youngsters and include accredited work experience or modified accreditation of school based curriculum subjects. In addition to this direct intervention, the Project also provided the ABSS a remit to explore more formally with schools the business of reviewing curriculum arrangements at Key Stage 4. The current review by the DfEE of timetable regulations and the inclusion of work experience as a

bona fide out of school activity give a clear boost to working adventurously in this area. The funding provided an additional teacher and part-time youth worker to give direct support to pupils at risk of exclusion and complement other support offered via the main ABSS team. It also gave the service the opportunity to deliver training on alternative frameworks of accreditation in addition to

developing the use of computers with disaffected pupils. Locally the LEA has been able to extend effective practice. Whilst the Year 11 Programme is mainly a full-time offer for students already out of school, the Year 10 initiative has a preventative dimension, emphasising the importance of being in school but incorporating formal non-school based experiences.

The advantage of developing the Year 11 Programme within the Attendance and Behaviour Support Service (ABSS) was that from a policy point of view it gave schools the message that the LEA was not in a position to provide for older disaffected pupils 'somewhere else'. The clear intention was that wherever possible pupils should be provided for in mainstream and that schools would have enhanced support made available to achieve this. The Year 11 Programme became an important element within the overall continuum of support that the LEA was able to offer. There were initial concerns from schools regarding the referral process, funding and monitoring of the new programme, but within the first year it was clear that the Year 11 Programme was a considerable improvement on the previous off-site unit. Closure of the unit had often been regarded as laudable, but progress had been stalled because there had simply not been the collective courage to venture into the unknown in what was a difficult climate at both national and local levels.

An important factor in this shift towards a more inclusive model of provision was that resourcing levels were maintained throughout the process. The closure of the unit did not result in the loss of posts, and in fact, led to a far more efficient deployment. In the first two terms of the new Year 11 Programme the keyworkers more than doubled their caseload, in addition to providing a range of in-school projects.

Making innovative practice permanent

In January 1997 the local authority made a number of important decisions. It decided that the funding of the ABSS be shifted towards a more permanent basis, in effect securing the formal establishment of the support service. The formal closure of the off-site unit was ratified and a restructure was outlined which resulted in the merger of the ABSS and the LEA's well established Learning Support Service, forming Merton's Integrated Support Service (ISS). The decision to close the primary special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties was made in January 1998 to take effect from the next school year.



changes and development

The ABSS at work

Disbanding the Patch System

Two fundamental aspects of the practice of Merton's Attendance and Behaviour Support Service, subsequently merged with Learning Support into a new Integrated Support Service, are directly linked to its effectiveness. These involved disbanding the conventional model of individual support teachers working exclusively within a group of schools (a patch system), and resisting the other support convention of allocating all schools set rates of support time.

The merged ABSS operates as a multi-disciplinary team with extensive links with a range of other agencies, some with specific contracts involving sessional input to the service. The team believes that even the most intractable situations can be tackled through a multi-professional assessment and approach. Subsequently no one team member has the solutions to the problems presented by a school, class or pupil.

Instead of allocating members of the team to 'a patch', workers are allocated per project in a way which enables an effective deployment of the multi-professional team.

- Each project can be separately staffed or, if appropriate, linked to another project within the same school. (For example: In one school two members of the team may be running groupwork for identified pupils in Year 10 whilst another member provides a regular consultancy session for the school's special educational needs co-ordinator.)
- Each project can be allocated a worker who has the skills most appropriate to the demands. (For example: Groupwork is usually staffed by a teacher but there is also the opportunity for occasional input from a youth worker when this is relevant.)
- Each project can draw in expertise from other other agencies. (For example: The development of whole school attendance policy invariably involves the school's education welfare officer.)

At the same time significant disadvantages are avoided. Individual team members do not become defensive of 'their' schools. Workers who spend their time in only three or four schools can find it difficult

When in doubt, leave nothing out

Support workers and teachers often find themselves in similar situations in which nothing seems to work. A high school had identified a dozen youngsters who were presenting varying concerns to staff in the back end of Year 8. An initial, low level intervention was to offer regular consultancy to the special

educational needs department. This seemed to suffice for the first year. However, as they became settled into Year 9, concerns about pupils increased and the special educational needs department and senior staff were feeling that consultancy was no longer enough – the youngsters' needs were far too extreme and the influence of the initial dozen pupils had spread across the year group.

After some consideration it was agreed to run three separate groups for Year 9 pupils. Common criteria were established for each group and a substantial level of support resource was invested in the school. A total of some two dozen pupils were involved. Within a couple of weeks the ABSS team felt that the groupwork approach was doomed to fail. While there was good reason to focus on separate issues per

to offer a critique of school practice, let alone have an impact on organisational change.

Individual schools are also discouraged from being possessive of 'their' support worker. Such possessiveness may flatter, but in the long-term it is inappropriate in a multi-disciplinary service whose strength is its diversity. There may be occasions where schools believe that specific projects demand particular staffing allocations, but this is different from blanket arrangements with schools over the exclusive allocation of particular support teachers.

It is possible for a school to have several support workers on a number of projects at the same time. It is also possible for the school to have no input at all during the course of the academic year.

Disbanding delegated time

In disbanding the other convention of support work, delegated time, it was recognised that almost all schools will argue, as a matter of course, that they can use additional support time if it is available. In trying to manage this expectation there is a tendency for support services to enter into an agreement – either formally or otherwise – with schools and LEAs to determine how much support time is available and then apportion it across all schools. The process can be made a little more sophisticated by introducing a formula based on additional factors but the outcome will invariably be the same: the oft repeated cry that there is still not enough time to meet needs.

Consequently support teams can feel undervalued and failing in the face of rising referrals and waiting lists while schools claim that the support services cannot cope with demand. LEAs find themselves shrugging at the enormity of it all and, in some cases, washing their hands of the matter, on the basis that they delegated funds to the schools to sort out their own provision, even though exclusion rates may be escalating.

Support time is delegated per project. Projects are negotiated on an individual basis and are time-limited. The support time required is

group, the overall result was to reinforce pupils' notion of themselves as deviant. This had not been the case with other groups in Years 10 and 11 and it had seemed reasonable to pursue this approach. However, this too seemed to have failed and the school was increasingly convinced that Year 9 was becoming unmanageable.

At the point at which the situation was perceived to be almost out of

control a switch was made to a high profile behaviourist approach. The support team worked alongside with the tutors in pulling together a list of fundamental rules, an agreed approach to reward and sanctions and then helped deliver the programme over a half term. Almost immediately a change occurred – the level of minor off-task behaviours were swiftly reduced and teachers felt increasingly confident in

managing a year group which in turn appeared to appreciate the setting of firm boundaries

Out of the initial list of pupils only three remained of significant concern and these were taken on as direct referrals to the ABSS and pursued through the formal statementing and assessment process. Fixed term exclusions were used on a number of occasions as part of an overall strategy to

agreed at the outset and is reviewable. The school gets whatever time it takes to provide the project outcomes, which are also negotiated at the start. Schools can request an unlimited number of projects and these can be staffed with a number of members of the ABSS.

The central concept underlying the project approach is a model of support provision based on improving the school system to prevent difficult behaviour rather than a model based purely on pupil referral. Schools are encouraged to identify areas for development – not simply individual children's 'needs'. The level of support provided in this way is invariably greater than in the 'child referral' model. The intention is that the precious support resource which many LEAs have delegated out, can be focussed on enhancing schools' pastoral capacity and teachers' professional competence and confidence in tackling disaffection and difficult behaviour.

Partnership planning

The process of negotiating a project – or partnership planning – is critical. If this is not carried out with due regard for detail and consultation, difficulties at a later stage are more likely and also more tricky to resolve.

Partnership implies there is agreement that support will be provided but it also means there is commitment from schools in order for any change to be sustained. Invariably schools identify a link member of staff for a project in addition to a member of staff being directly involved, perhaps by running some of the sessions for a group of pupils, or co-ordinating in-service training for support assistants/midday supervisors. The most problematic projects have been where schools have regarded relationships with the ABSS along the lines of conventional support and have not understood the commitment needed to make an intervention effective. Similarly it is confusing for support workers to imagine that they can operate as 'hero innovators', taking over responsibilities which should remain with the school.

stabilise the year group. Throughout the process which spanned a year, it has been necessary for the support team to be critical of their intervention and to be prepared to acknowledge the limitations of a given approach.

There was an implicit acknowledgement that the school's concerns were well founded and that the situation required a high level of resourcing, but there was

also a belief that a solution could be found without recourse to discounting the pupils. The ultimate situation was that the school achieved a means of minimising the impact of a diminished handful of pupils, whilst celebrating the positive achievement of the overall year group – something which not been possible for the previous six months.

Kevin's case

The LEA assessed Kevin when he was in Year 2 and he was issued with a statement in relation to his emotional and behavioural needs. He had assistant and teacher support for the rest of his first school years and this arrangement was replicated when he transferred to middle school.

Kevin's childhood experience was

A main advantage of providing support through projects and partnership planning is that interventions can be more easily plotted across the school year. A support service which is driven only by schools identifying pupils in crisis has little opportunity to exercise control over either demand or response. A project approach encourages schools to consider when intervention is most appropriate. Whole school policy work takes a substantial period to arrange and needs to be planned at least a term or so in advance, likewise with in-service training. On the other hand group work may have to be initiated and prepared within two or three weeks.

There is also the advantage that partnership planning puts maximum emphasis on agreeing and measuring outcomes making it possible for projects aimed at preventing difficult behaviour to be evaluated in quantitative terms.

Working three levels of intervention

Working with schools – We will all be aware of the fictional school which created its own policy by borrowing a document on computer disc from a friendly neighbouring school and simply exchanging the school's name. It is unlikely that this kind of practice ever makes a difference to how pupils behave or how teachers manage pupil behaviour in school. Process is critical to policy development, never more so than in relation to behaviour and attendance.

The two pre-requisites for developing sound whole school policy, and therefore effective practice, are structured discussion and informed discussion. The first can be secured through efficiently chaired working party meetings with a clear agenda. The second can be achieved through the school carrying out an 'audit' of existing practice during the first stage of the policy process. Only through understanding what the current practice means to pupils, teachers and others, can realistic targets be set. The survey exercise in itself invites the involvement of the whole school community and raises the profile of the efforts of the representative working party.

marked by features common to many children with emotional and behavioural difficulties; his father had been absent, in prison, and his mother found it difficult to maintain consistent management of Kevin's behaviour. Often Kevin would become defiant and aggressive, particularly towards teachers, although other pupils were also victims of his anger.

The ABSS was involved in

providing advice during the latter stages of Kevin's first school career and this work was relatively light touch. However, after his first year at middle school Kevin's behaviour became increasingly problematic. Kevin's behaviour challenged key members of staff, including his main class teacher, and relationships between the school, Kevin and his mother deteriorated rapidly in Year 5. Social Services became

increasingly involved in supporting mother in coping with her situation and this involved a programme of weekly respite accommodation for Kevin. However, the school found it impossible to manage Kevin's behaviour and fixed-term exclusions became a frequent response to incidents of disruption.

Finally, at an annual review of Kevin's statement it was recommended that he be placed at

The working party meetings need to be a concise and efficient use of time. In many respects they should provide an informal level of on-going in-service training, eventually providing the school with its own core body of expertise. The culmination of the work is the dissemination of the draft policy to the whole staff with clear guidance regarding support for its implementation. The final document should hold no surprises, but represent the collective aims of the school community.

Working with classes – Supporting the classroom is a complex business. It is an area of work fraught with a range of potential misconceptions and cross-purposes. It is exceptionally important that when supporting along systemic principles expectations are clarified right at the outset of work. The only experience that most class teachers have of other adults in the classroom is when they have been appointed to assist in general tasks or with specific regard to a pupil. Any other experience is likely to be linked to either inspection or appraisal, both of which are infrequent, and in the case of the former at least, associated with anxiety.

The partnership planning process is designed to establish at an early stage the role of the support teacher, whilst also clarifying the aim of the intervention. The important task of the supporter is to determine what might be best described as a consultative relationship with the class teacher. The basic premise is that the class teacher will be implementing and sustaining change and this must be clear from the outset. This is necessary in terms of avoiding any chance of the teacher believing that the support worker will be responsible for change.

Having established the ground rules for the relationship, ideally through the partnership plan, baseline data collection is imperative for establishing success and feeding any review of the work. There are a number of ways of gathering this data including:

- on/off task levels (for example, using Towards Better Behaviour assessment material – see Where to find out more, page 33)
- pupil attendance
- pupil punctuality

the LEA's special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The relationship between the class teacher and Kevin's mother had broken down irrevocably. Within a fortnight Kevin was permanently excluded.

Any child permanently excluded is disadvantaged but those with statements can experience particular difficulties while consideration is given to an appropriate placement.

Kevin remained out of school for over a term whilst the LEA and Kevin's parents struggled to agree a future placement. In the light of the annual review the LEA initially recommended that Kevin should be placed at the local special school. However, his mother, supported by Social Services contested the decision, insisting on a supported second chance placement at a mainstream school.

The ABSS negotiated a placement in the school of the parent's choice and agreed a high level of support which included in-school counselling sessions and re-engaging Kevin with the local Child Guidance Service which were especially anxious at Kevin's time out of school. The receiving school had a number of reservations about admitting Kevin – they already had a full roll and other pupils with

- pupil exclusions
- in-school sanction mechanisms, eg reports, detentions, etc
- qualitative data via teacher's notes, parent/pupil feedback.

In terms of actual practice, the support worker may share the introduction of a new strategy, for example behavioural techniques, before handing the entire responsibility over to the class teacher. The emphasis is then on monitoring the approach, providing resources, trouble-shooting if necessary and finally evaluating the impact of the intervention. In addition to these tasks, the support worker may also start to identify either individual pupils whose needs are not being met through the intervention, or pick up on issues which are to do with how broader school policy is impinging on developing practice. In either case it is necessary for these issues to be raised at the point of review.

Working with individuals – The work of the ABSS at individual level is carried out within the framework of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. All work with pupils is planned and monitored through an individual education plan (IEP) and the school's special educational needs co-ordinator is invariably involved in co-ordinating any school input. Most of the individual work is at stage 3 of the Code but some may develop into the formal stages of assessment. In these situations the ABSS will provide reports based on observations, any home visits and discussions with the child.

Some individual work is carried out with statemented pupils. Usually this support has been over and above the provision formally described in the pupil's statement. Often it will include training the support assistant or drafting a behaviour management programme with the class/subject teacher or special needs co-ordinator.

The 1996 Education Act identifies 'emotional and behavioural difficulty' as a distinct area of need. Locally, requests for formal assessment of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has risen and the work of the ABSS has been to encourage schools to take a more diagnostic perspective of pupil behaviour. Pupils have tended to be given significant levels of support assistant and/or teacher time

statements for emotional and behavioural difficulties within Kevin's year group. However, they agreed to give it a shot.

At the time of writing Kevin is enjoying a successful second chance. At a recent review of his re-integration it was acknowledged that despite a couple of minor difficulties – which had more to do with professionals co-ordinating support than Kevin's behaviour – his

placement was secure. For the first time in years teachers could identify Kevin's success, note his growing capacity to manage his anger and contribute positively to school life. Perhaps more importantly a potential specific learning need was emerging which would obviously throw light on some aspects of Kevin's in-class behaviour.

in order to maintain a mainstream placement. Only in exceptional circumstances will a special school placement be identified.

Older pupils who have a statement of need may be referred to the Year 11 Programme if appropriate, but on the whole the Year 11 Programme is used by pupils who are not statemented.



changes and development

Evaluating progress

Exclusion rates

In Merton there has been a welcome shift in the reduction of numbers of pupils being permanently excluded from school which runs contrary to the national picture of rising levels. However, fixed terms exclusions have risen over the past four years, and this was anticipated for the following reasons:

- As part of the work of the ABSS, schools have often been advised of the use of incremental fixed term exclusions as part of a planned programme to modify particularly disruptive pupil behaviour. It is interesting to note that for many headteachers, who rarely exclude, there can be confusion about the use, or even the existence, of fixed term exclusion. There have been a number of examples of where a planned approach to the use of fixed term exclusion has avoided the use of permanent exclusion.
- In the light of the 1993 Education Act the LEA issued local guidelines which reiterated the need for headteachers to inform the LEA of all exclusions. Consequently it was not a surprise to see an increase in what in the past may have been regarded as unofficial suspensions.

Even though there is a local sense of achievement in respect of falling rates, there remain significant concerns. The over-representation of African-Caribbean pupils is in line with national figures, and the number of pupils with statements is also worryingly high. To this end there have been two very recent initiatives which remain in their infancy involving a partnership with the Borough's Youth Service team and identifying additional funding to further enable direct support for reintegrating and maintaining disaffected pupils in Years 9 and 10.

Pupils out of school

Another significant area of work has been reducing the number of pupils out of school at any one time through speeding up the re-integration process of excluded pupils and reducing the amount of time pupils spend out of school awaiting placement. This has

Return from exclusion

Geoff (Year 2) was referred to the ABSS after a period of fixed term exclusion and both the headteacher and special educational needs co-ordinator were anxious that he would not last into the following academic year without being permanently excluded. On his return Geoff was placed in a different class group. At an initial consultation the

support worker listened not only to Geoff's story, but that of his prospective new class and the teacher's anxieties about Geoff's return from exclusion. One of the important messages arising from this session was that there were a number of pupils presenting difficulties and that the class teacher – an experienced and enthusiastic colleague – was convinced that she would not be able to accommodate Geoff.

The class teacher spoke of how she felt that she was constantly battling with the troublesome bunch of pupils over petty concerns at the expense of giving attention to the well behaved youngsters. The ABSS worker felt that a Rules–Praise–Ignore (RPI) approach would be useful as a first stage, with a view to pursuing more specific strategies in relation to Geoff's assessment. The approach was explained to the

involved a number of detailed negotiations between the major players in this area of work including the Pupil Tuition Service, the ABSS, the Education Welfare Service and Schools Administration Department. Collectively an increasingly effective package of support can be offered to schools at the point of re-integration and this can include home-school liaison, assessment, direct in-class support and monitoring the placement.

On average the LEA has between 30 and 35 pupils out of school at any one time. Most of these are excluded pupils, some from out of borough schools. The provision during this period is pupil tuition which is not dissimilar from that in other boroughs. The anticipated period of tuition is five hours per week over six weeks at the end of which a placement should be identified. Pupils are tutored at home, or occasionally in an appropriate location, for example youth service provision. The numbers being dealt with are arguably too small to warrant a dedicated unit and the absence of a PRU means that the difficulties arising from institutionalising excluded pupils and the subsequent delays in re-integrating PRU students are mostly avoided. The level of re-integration in the term September 1996 – December 1996 was 85%, the following term – a particularly short one – the level was 65%.

Time out

The period of time for which pupils are out of school is an area that has only recently been quantified in any comparative form. At the end of 1996 the average pupil time out of school was 40 days. This figure is slightly misleading because it includes a handful of pupils who had been out of school for over seven months due to unresolvable issues. However, over the following term, Winter 1997, the average time out was reduced to 23 days and is expected to continue to fall as the support agencies become increasingly efficient at negotiating re-integration packages.

teacher and additional materials describing the process were provided.

Geoff resumed attendance and spent the rest of the year at school without being excluded. The class teacher spoke of how the RPI strategy had been extremely effective in maintaining a high level of on-task activity, while freeing up the teacher's time to reward positive achievement.

The long haul

A headteacher of a middle school telephoned Merton's Attendance and Behaviour Support Service and requested support for developing a whole school behaviour policy. The response from the service was supportive but with a degree of reticence – was the call prompted by the imminent Ofsted inspection, or was this part of a well thought

through school development plan?

It took several weeks of negotiation and an aborted attempt to run a working party without senior management support, before a re-drafted partnership plan was in place and a more representative working party was set up. The process of auditing existing practice regarding behaviour management was initially an uncomfortable one for a staff team who imagined the

Preventative indicators

More importantly the annual evaluations of the ABSS indicate progress in terms of developing sustainable preventative practice. For the past three years both qualitative and quantitative returns have expressed strong support for the ABSS approach. Staff at all levels have claimed that support has enabled significant progress in terms of managing behaviour either at class or whole school levels. The evaluation in the first year provided data illustrating the rates of improvement in on/off task activity in individual classes.

Permanent exclusion hotline

Since September 1996 the ABSS have operated a hotline for headteachers who are considering permanently excluding a pupil. The idea was prompted by the successful model in Staffordshire and modified to the local context. This service is only part of the overall ABSS provision for individual pupils and early experience indicated that if headteachers could talk through their concerns and negotiate some kind of interim support, a permanent exclusion might be avoided.

In the first two terms, September 1996 – March 1997, thirteen pupils were discussed on the hotline, only two of which went on to be excluded permanently. The others were either supported individually for a time or the development of classwork was felt to be the more appropriate type of support.

The hotline is still in its infancy and will need to become more widely known about and used before it makes any substantial impact on the overall levels of permanent exclusion. However, first impressions indicate that it forms a potentially critical dimension in the overall strategy to minimise exclusion.

Monitoring performance

A key aspect of the work in Merton has been the development of monitoring arrangements in relation to exclusions, pupils out of

policy was going to be about what the teachers thought pupils should do and what would happen if they did not. Instead the views of pupils became a central element in forming approaches. The other highly contentious issue was that of teachers giving out praise for appropriate behaviour. This was seen as too risky for some but a behaviour policy is nothing without praise, so negotiations continued

until we found a way forward.

From a disparate mix of individuals at the outset the working party gradually became engaged as a team discussing possibilities and solutions. In addition to providing the overall framework for the development of policy, the behaviour support teacher at the school administered the working party meetings, taking minutes and ultimately typing up

the draft policy. The central commitment of the school was to discuss key principles and procedures and implement the policy.

It took almost a year before the working party was ready to introduce an innovative approach to behaviour difficulties in time for the new September intake. A full day was dedicated to explaining procedures with staff and

school and preventative interventions. There has been an increase in the number of databases created to track the progress of pupils through the exclusion and re-integration process, in addition to monitoring the level and type of support work provided to schools. Consequently, in the case of the latter it is possible to determine how much ABSS input is at either whole school, class or individual pupil level. The recording of support input is achieved through visit sheets which detail hours per project and school staff contacted which when culminated can provide important evaluative data. The overall database for recording project work is updated monthly and serves as a useful prompt for support workers to consider how they intend to review and close projects, while enabling the team leader to manage an equitable allocation of new work.

All of the ABSS evaluations have been validated through varying levels of involvement of external sources, either through the LEA's inspectorate team or via independent consultants. The final reports have also been made available to the Education Committee to inform decision making about progressing provision for disaffected pupils and maintaining the service's high profile.

Conclusion

In the busy times in which we are working it is easy to move from task to task without reflecting on our collective experience. There has been a high level of interest in the work developed in Merton. Colleagues from many LEAs have spent time with the behaviour team and support teachers have been involved in training for other authorities.

The headline success indicators have an obvious attraction:

- fall in exclusion rates,
- closure of the off-site unit
- low numbers out of school.
- closure of the primary special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

highlighting possible trouble spots and last minute hitches. Pupils were briefed over the first week of term and the new policy approach then became fully operational. Two terms later there had not been a single permanent exclusion. Far more importantly, the procedures for giving out praise were still being used and an essentially positive teaching approach remained intact.

Behaviour al fresco

Among common problems identified by headteachers are the difficulties generated at lunchtimes. This is often further explained by identifying the alleged prime suspects – members of the midday supervisor team who it is claimed neither understand nor manage children's behaviour effectively. In the early stages ABSS support

focused solely on delivering training to supervisors. However, it swiftly emerged that this was a complex area of school life. Relatively untrained, poorly paid staff were expected to manage more youngsters at any one time than a teacher and also at the most unstructured period of the day. Furthermore, levels of communication between senior management and class teachers

What is less obvious in this account is the tremendous effort that has been made by support staff in driving innovation forward in difficult times, as well as the collective achievement of education welfare officers and LEA officers and the substantial work of hundreds of teachers in the LEA's schools in endeavouring to understand and respond to pupils' anger and disaffection. Merton has given a clear signal that it takes very seriously the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, a process which is neither cheap nor trouble free and continues to create tensions between meeting the needs of individuals and the needs of the wider community. However Merton has committed itself to a problem solving approach and there is little room for complacency.

One of the key lessons to be learned is that there is considerable gain from pursuing best practice, even if that results in developing work that seems to go against broader trends. For example, Merton continued to maintain its central special needs support services when many other authorities either delegated or cut crucial peripatetic teams. Reducing services can undermine an LEA's capacity to respond effectively in areas where schools have little, if any incentive, to commit time, energy or money.

Another key lesson from our experience is that having established a support service it is critical that innovative practice is made as widely available as possible and not simply targeted at those schools which are most receptive to change. In the field of emotional and behavioural difficulties and the related areas of exclusion and disaffection a borough wide approach is integral to overall success. By ensuring that the work of the ABSS was available in all schools the LEA was in a position to respond wherever the need arose.

It was also important that the ABSS did not operate in isolation from other elements in the LEA. The philosophy and principles of the team were reflected through the education department and support practice was actively endorsed and promoted by officers and other agencies, notably the education welfare service. Although this coherent understanding took time to develop it has enabled front-line staff to work in an increasingly effective way and has also given

with supervisors were often inadequate or non-existent.

The ABSS rapidly developed its work with schools and midday supervisor teams. Initial training programmes were planned with both teachers and supervisors and a key element in the programme was promoting effective communication between groups. Other input included managing childrens' behaviour, talking with children

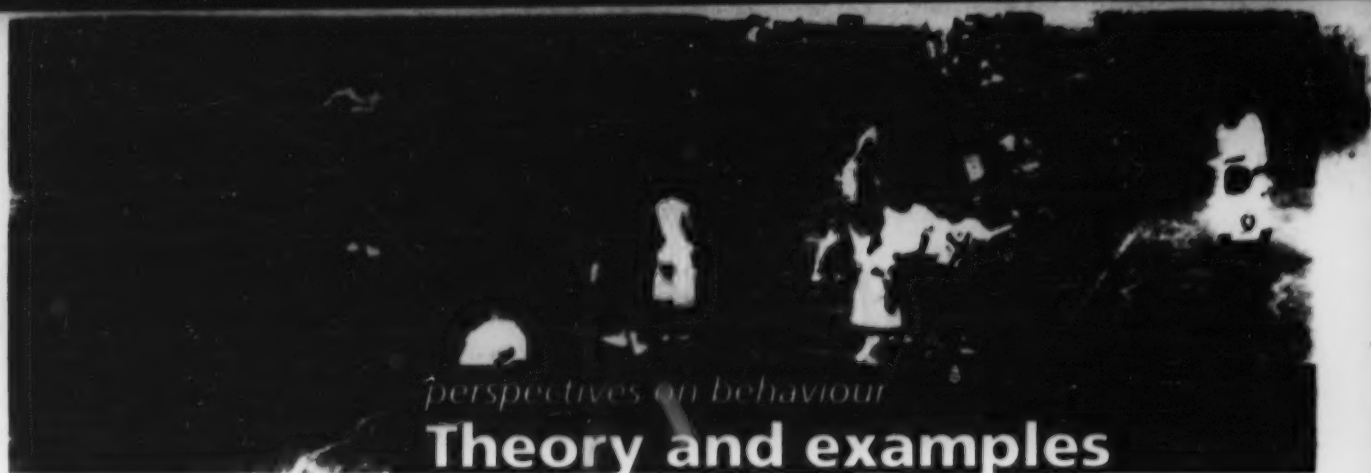
effectively and introducing games for children. The sessions were certificated by the ABSS and provided an introduction to a City and Guilds Playworker course set up between the ABSS and the local FE college. The ABSS introductory course has been run across many first and middle schools and continues to be one of the most highly valued aspects of the service.

clear messages to schools about the importance of pupils being in mainstream education.

While looking back prompts the feeling we have been struggling against the national trend, the future looks more promising with a potentially different direction in terms of inclusive provision for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties and the opportunity to formalise much of what has already been achieved.

Locally one of the key areas is the development of more specialised support arrangements for primary pupils following the closure of the special school for primary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The decision to close the school was made partly because of its falling roll and also because of an increasing demand for local provision for older pupils with autistic needs. Clearly there is a real need to secure sufficient support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties returning to mainstream and this has been pursued through establishing a specialist team within existing services, namely the Integrated Support Service, and the Educational Psychology and Child Mental Health Services. Placements at the secondary special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties fell between 1992 and 1997, although there has been a recent rise mainly due to other boroughs referring pupils there. In terms of future trends on exclusions the outlook is hopeful. It may be possible to reduce permanent exclusions even further and also to consider introducing a policy of identifying a different placement as an alternative to using permanent exclusions at all.

At Merton we maintain a fundamental optimism that pupils, parents and schools want to succeed. When key players in education falter in this core belief sadly it can lead to practice, procedures and policies which penalise and alienate those who need to belong. Educators in a learning society have a choice to make about their behaviour and that of their respective organisations both for themselves as professionals and on behalf of the children in their charge. Their behaviour can reflect the bitterness of the recent punitive past or it can begin to rebuild a new sense of direction based on dignity and respect for some of our most vulnerable children.



A brief overview of the range of different perspectives which underpin behaviour support at Merton together with examples of how they work in practice

An eclectic approach

The Merton model of behaviour support is based on an eclectic approach to understanding behaviour. If we are seeking ways of responding to difficult behaviour it serves us well to first consider different ways of understanding what motivates individuals. The set of perspectives outlined in this section are not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive to other ways of understanding behaviour. In Merton the ABSS has not relied upon any specific perspective. One of the messages emphasised to teachers is that the perspectives offer possible ways of understanding difficult behaviour which in turn give rise to strategies which might be used.

Each perspective has its limitations and teachers can become exasperated when a particular approach fails. The tendency in such situations is, understandably, to claim that a pupil's behaviour has so deteriorated he or she is beyond redemption. However, what is less common is for teachers to critically appreciate the basis of their intervention and question the validity of the chosen perspective.

For example, a teacher may become infuriated when, after spending several hours over a week discussing patiently with a child the implications of his or her disruptive behaviour, the teacher finds the same pupil assaulting another child. The fury is as much to do with the continual acts of aggression as anger at the apparent wasting of time and rejection of the teacher's best intentions to resolve issues. A critical appraisal of the approach – which was essentially founded on cognitive principles – reveals it was based on an unrealistic assumption about the relative maturity of the pupil to understand the concept of self reflection, negotiation and target setting. The child did not fail – nor indeed did the teacher. What was experienced was the limitation of a specific approach.

In the race to resolve problematic situations it is not necessary to put

all our money on one horse – or one perspective. We can spread our gamble across all perspectives knowing we can all be winners in improving classroom practice.

Transactional analysis – managing the moment of conflict

The theory ...

Perhaps the most central aspect of work in Merton responding to difficult behaviour are the principles of transactional analysis (TA). In TA terms each individual of all ages has the potential to operate in one of three 'ego-states' – adult/child/parent. These ego-states can be changed according to the transactions in which we find ourselves. In simplistic terms, a person in child state can respond either compliantly or rebelliously, whilst someone operating in their 'parent' state can be either nurturing or over-controlling. Clearly the exchange between, say the teacher acting in over-controlling parent role and a pupil as rebellious child, is bound by definition to be a stormy one. Unless one of the two individuals chooses to shift their ego-state, the feuding transactions will continue until one or other exits or is exited. The third ego-state, that of adult, represents the rational, intellectual dimension of the individual which adults and children can choose to abandon or adopt as appropriate.

In practice ...

At times of difficulty there is a considerable likelihood that teachers take up the position of the over-controlling parent which, by its nature, provokes the rebellious child in the pupil. Likewise a pupil may come across as rebellious and provoke the controlling parent in the teacher. The most effective response to conflictual situations is to engage in 'adult' dimension and endeavour to encourage the other person – the angry pupil, parent or colleague – into engaging their adult state.

Clearly in many cases the effort to retain our adult self and promote the same in the angry pupil does not provide an immediate result and instead the pupil might continue to come across in a rebellious mode. The key danger is abandoning the adult position and shifting into controlling parent, thereby further entrenching the pupil as rebel. Operating at their most professional teachers need to pursue the 'adult' in the pupil, even if he or she is not willing. The reasons for this are:

Teachers are on a hiding to nothing if they are drawn into behaving in a 'controlling parent' mode. The slanging match will become on the one hand increasingly entrenched and, at the same time, provide tremendous entertainment for the rest of the class.

More significantly, it is important to note we can only respond in adult mode if we have had experience of engaging in adult to adult transactions. Consequently, the pupil who is over-controlled at home

may simply not be well versed in adult-like exchanges, for instance, they may not be used to open-ended questions or use of emotional vocabulary. Therefore it is even more imperative for the classroom to provide sufficient opportunities for adult thinking and transactions to take place.

While there are a number of ways in which promoting the adult can be done as part of everyday classroom life, episodes of conflict can serve as an important opportunity to demonstrate good practice. Even in the most effectively managed classrooms, conflicts arise and the most proficient class teachers can find themselves drawn into a situation that they wish they could have avoided.

One of the most striking observations made about moments of conflict is that these are times when teachers need to draw upon all their professional resources – yet it is precisely these moments when they find themselves reacting personally. This can lead to feeling doubly angry with a child's behaviour – not only has the child disrupted the lesson, but she has provoked an entirely undesired response from the teacher! Working with teachers in managing conflict and aggressive situations has become an increasingly common area of training. The emphasis in the training is on enabling both the teacher and pupil to make choices through the angry exchange. The dangers of becoming trapped – either as the adult or child – are emphasised. Issues about maintaining control and 'losing face' are explored and isolated incidents are placed within a wider class/school context.

The behaviour management perspective

The theory ...

Think of Pavlov and what he did with his salivating dogs and you get a rough and ready illustration of the behaviour management perspective. Based on the premise that behaviour can be taught and learnt, the behaviourist sets about his or her work establishing clear rules, rewards and sanctions. In the same way as teachers promote the learning of literacy, numeracy and other skills, so behaviourists assume that behaviour can and should be taught. While many teachers expect that they will have to tackle the business of teaching reading to those who cannot read, for example, they may not believe this is the case in relation to behaviour. Consequently, frustrations arise when there is a disparity between teachers' expectations about behaviour and the reality presented by their class.

The principles of behaviour management are undoubtedly invaluable to the class teacher – they are essentially about clarifying what is appropriate behaviour and teaching to it through clear rules. 'Good' behaviour can be reinforced through extensive reinforcement by using rewards, whilst inappropriate behaviour may be prevented through careful sanctioning.

In practice ...

Most schools rely on what are basically behaviourist approaches – for example, the use of detentions to deter lateness and various commendation systems to reward good work. In terms of working with large numbers of people – both staff and pupils – the establishment of clear rules is crucial to the efficient running of a school.

One of the most common and well tried behaviourist approaches is the 'Rules – Praise – Ignore' (RPI) strategy. This involves the teacher and pupils agreeing a handful of general rules, positively expressed, for instance, 'Walk quietly around school' instead of 'Don't Run'. The teacher is then pro-active in praising pupils where they are demonstrating the rule and links the praise with the rule, for example; 'Well done, Henry for walking down the corridor quietly'.

Where possible inappropriate behaviour is ignored but praise is given immediately after the rule is then observed by the pupil. RPI is an ideal method for dealing with low level, irritating behaviours such as wandering around the classroom, calling out, talking during instructions and fiddling with equipment, but less appropriate for picking up on more serious and distracting behaviours.

Behaviour management techniques can also be valuable for dealing with pupils on an individual level. Specific targets can be set with simple rewards in place on completion. A common approach with junior pupils is the use of smiley faces, or ten minutes of 'free choice' as a means of reinforcing desired behaviours. Sanctioning can include time-out procedures during which pupils are removed from a lesson or activity for a given time and are not given any teacher or peer attention. All these techniques are based on the assumption that behaviour can be learned and unlearned and that teachers can set about teaching and managing pupil behaviour.

The psychodynamic perspective

The theory ...

According to this perspective how we feel about ourselves can determine how we behave, and how we feel can be shaped by our past experiences. Consequently, a youngster who has been rejected, betrayed and perhaps brutalised by adults in early life may find it difficult to trust or respect them in the present. It would be no surprise then, to find that this often results in angry and defiant behaviour in school. It may not necessarily take a particularly neglectful past for children to find the present difficult. Psychiatrists have a longstanding curiosity regarding early childhood experiences and in understanding the gradual and problematic shift from the dependent infant into the autonomous child. Linked to the psychodynamic perspective is the concept of self-esteem. Commonly

defined as 'how we feel about ourselves', self-esteem has become an increasingly-familiar phrase in schools. The happier we feel about ourselves the more likely we may rise to the challenge of learning and the implicit risk of failure. Consequently, raising pupils' self-esteem can be directly linked to increasing achievement.

In practice ...

One of the central approaches is to incorporate therapeutic activities through which pupils can express their sense of the world. In the early years this is relatively straightforward. Many nurseries and reception classes have sand and water play areas. Home corners in infant classrooms and ready access to art and craft materials serve to provide opportunities for explorative play and expression. However, as children progress to the upper junior and secondary levels, therapeutic avenues can become more limited.

Circle time is an increasingly popular approach being developed by schools across the phases. Based on the work of Jenny Mosely and generations of drama teachers before her, circle time is a class-based forum through which pupils can discuss issues which affect how they feel; their hopes and aspirations and their fears and anxieties. It is an ideal space in which pupils can identify what they value in their peers, and contribute directly to raising individuals' self-esteem.

The cognitive approach

The theory ...

We are essentially thoughtful creatures and therefore we can apply our thinking skills to resolve problematic aspects of our behaviour. Through reflection we may understand what it is that we do that annoys others and identify how we might modify our behaviour in the light of our thinking. In many respects the cognitive approach is one that appeals to teachers. It is based on the humane principles that are associated with problem solving which is the basis of much student counselling. The emphasis is to provoke empathy and rationality in order to bring about an enhanced understanding of how we might maximise our potential.

In practice ...

Arguably the cognitive approach is as familiar to schools as the behaviourist. The use of targeted contracts, negotiated with pupils is fairly commonplace, as is the practice of talking through issues with individuals after an incident – brokering between warring factions or encouraging pupils to see things from another's point of view. Personal, social and health education programmes are invariably founded on cognitive concepts such as discursive investigation and the emphasis on reasoning. In many respects some schools have

extended cognitive practice through the introduction of school councils and school/peer counselling schemes which have experienced a recent resurgence.

The eco-systemic perspective

The theory ...

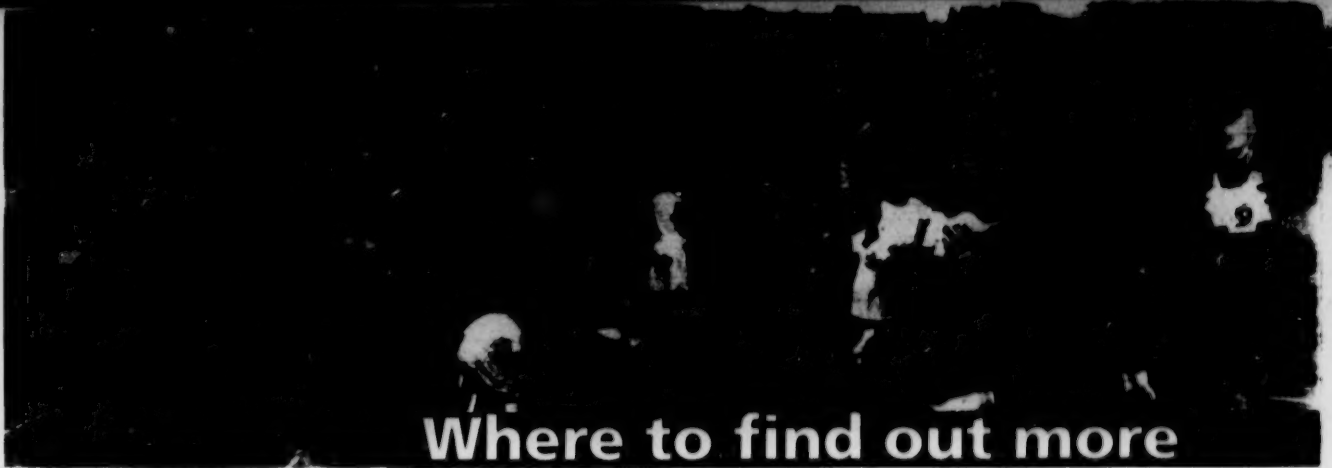
The systemic practitioner works on the premise that all behaviour has a legitimacy for the individual. In other words, no matter how destructive a pattern of behaviour might appear, it has significant meaning, or is serving some purpose for the individual involved. The key task is to unpack the situation in order to understand the purpose of the behaviour. The systemic perspective is also founded on the notion that the purpose of the behaviour may be woven within a complex series of relationships between the pupil and their parent/carer, siblings, classmates, teacher and peers. Without appreciating the pupil in his/her eco-system it is unlikely that the meaning of their behaviour will be fully understood.

Another critical and, ultimately challenging, aspect to this perspective is the premise that teachers can inadvertently behave in a way that sustains problematic behaviour. A pupil may derive value from a negative relationship with staff who can be oblivious to the fact that their ranting and raving is perversely beneficial.

In practice ...

The systemic approach is reliant on teachers analysing their own behaviour in relation to a given problematic situation and considering what they might change in order to shift the relationship between the pupil and the behaviour. This might involve changing expectations, 're-framing' situations or sleuthing cases with other members of staff. The approach is also dependent on involving others – support teacher, social worker, parent, psychologist – in investigating possible solutions.

Further sources of more detailed information regarding the perspectives on behaviour outlined in this section are listed on page 33.



Where to find out more

The following publications provide further information on mainstream responses to difficult behaviour:

Building a Better Behaved School, P. Galvin *et al*, Longman.

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Disaffection and inclusion

Merton's mainstream approach to difficult behaviour

Giles Barrow

This booklet describes an inclusive approach to disaffection in Merton Education Authority, south west London. Instead of concentrating on providing for pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties in an off-site behaviour support centre, Merton switched its main efforts to preventing difficult behaviour through supporting mainstream schools. The booklet explains how new ways of working were developed and evaluated, includes examples of classroom practice and descriptions of the range of perspectives on behaviour which underpin mainstream support at Merton.

Price £7